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SUBJECT: EL FASHER IDP REP ON HILAL APPOINTMENT AND UNAMID

REF: KHARTOUQ0

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a January 27 meeting with FieldOff, a representative of Abu Shouk internally displaced persons (IDP) camp gave a local perspective on latest Darfur events, including the appointment of former janjaweed militia leader Sheikh Musa Hilal to the post of Advisor to the Minister of Federal Rule. He also described IDP concerns about the mandate of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). END SUMMARY.

MUSA HILAL APPOINTMENT "NORMAL" TO IDPS

12. (SBU) In a January 27 meeting with FieldOff, a representative of Abu Shouk IDP camp in El Fasher, North Darfur, dismissed the federal appointment of Musa Hilal as a "very normal" action for the Government of Sudan (GoS). Speaking on behalf of the IDP population of Abu Shouk camp, he said that Darfurians are used to far worse affronts than this appointment. He considered the announcement as more of a slap in the face to the international community than to the IDPs whom Hilal once persecuted, as well as a blow to GoS credibility.

13. (SBU) However, the IDP rep expressed concern about rumors circulating in Abu Shouk that Hilal's appointment would make him part of the eventual peace negotiations on Darfur. FieldOff urged the IDP rep not to encourage or to overreact to such rumors, noting that most observers view the appointment as symbolic (reftel). (Comment: However, it would not surprise us if the GOS does send Hilal to the next round of negotiations. End comment). The IDP rep assured that while Hilal's political visibility frustrated the IDPs, it was not enough to make them resort to rioting or violence.

MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT UNAMID MANDATE

14. (SBU) Despite IDP suspicions that UNAMID is collaborating with GoS police and Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signatories, the rep predicted there would be no protests among IDPs in response to the expanded presence of UNAMID. However, he highlighted three causes for IDP distrust of UNAMID. First, he said that UNAMID cooperation with GoS police presents a problem. IDPs equate the GoS police with the janjaweed, since some of these former militia members were incorporated into national police ranks. As such, for the IDPs the GoS police represents the same "killing machine" which drove IDPs from their homes in the first place, and for UNAMID to be seen as cooperating closely with them as part of its policing responsibilities is a blow to the peacekeepers' neutrality in the eyes of the IDPs.

15. (SBU) Second, the IDPs are mistrustful of the DPA signatories, in particular the Sudan Liberation Army of Minni Minawi (SLA/MM). The IDP rep said IDPs consider the DPA (which he called "Minni's peace") too fragile to be sustained or trusted, so they have no confidence in dealing with Minni's movement. Regarding UNAMID reports of a rise in the number of armed elements in IDP camps, the rep blamed

SLA/MM. He also blamed SLA/MM for the rash of carjackings currently plaguing the humanitarian community in North Darfur. "Minni's men think Zam Zam [IDP camp] is their territory," he explained, "so they come and go with as many arms as they please."

¶16. (SBU) The rep's final point on IDP perceptions was in regard to the presence of arms in IDP camps. He blamed not only SLA/MM for the upswing in armed elements in the camps, but also GoS-planted "spies," such as Gimir and Kineen tribesmen who are residents of the camps. The rep claimed these tribesmen are outfitted with GoS uniforms and arms. He stressed the need for UNAMID to police the camps and to disarm these groups as quickly as possible.

¶17. (SBU) COMMENT: The lack of outcry from IDPs to Musa Hilal's appointment is perhaps surprising, though presumably by now the IDP population knows what to expect from the Khartoum regime. It is imperative that UNAMID build trust with the IDP population and remain neutral, otherwise IDP ties to rebel movements who are perceived as protecting their interests will only strengthen, particularly with SLA/Abdelwahid. The expulsion of non-signatory Ceasefire Commission reps from El Fasher over recent weeks also appears to have had little effect on the IDPs. It is worth noting that Abdelwahid's reps remain in El Fasher, however, despite the forced departure of other non-signatory movements' members. This likely explains the muted reaction to the expulsions among Abdelwahid's many supporters in the IDP camps.

¶18. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ